

CAPITOLA SUNSET

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Begonias-to-Go is Walkway Winner



Once again “Begonias to Go, Head to Toe” was a big hit with locals and visitors alike at the Capitola Begonia Festival. Kids, parents, grandparents and even a few four-legged creatures were spotted crowding into the popular event sponsored by Gayles Bakery and Rosticceria and hosted by the Capitola Historical Museum.



Thanks for the help Tommy!

Jogging a Memory

The instant the leader broke from the pack of 276 runners and sprinted across the finish line, the date of July 23, 1973 was a pivotal moment for Capitola.

Creation of the 5.8 mile Wharf to Wharf race was a brilliant idea, so immediately popular that the annual contest seems to have invented itself. But innovations that appear natural and events that run smoothly are rarely as effortless as they may appear. Months of meetings, careful choreography, and committed team work behind the scenes are necessary. The race from Santa Cruz to Capitola has been planned in painstaking detail every summer for 37 years, and has—as a locally grown event—always been a winner.

Yet as time speeds by, the historical inception of the race seems to have been left in the dust. The origin—particularly from a historical point-of-view—is nevertheless a landmark in its importance. Here’s the story:

In 1972, Jim and Barbara Reding bought and began to restore a handsome building known as the Hihn Superintendent’s Office at the corner of Capitola and Monterey Avenues. It had once been a village grocery, but evolved in the 1890s to become home and business office of Frederick Hihn’s superintendent, Frank Reanier. Later, in the Twenties, this was the headquarters of H. Allen Rispin and the Bay Head Land Company, and the workplace where a young actor and future Academy Award winner named Walter Brennan sold lots for summer homes.

Long after the Rispin era, in the late 1960s, Capitola city officials sought to raze buildings considered to be decaying or substandard. Even though the superintendent’s office was the oldest commercial structure in town, it was slated for demolition. The Redings saved it through a hands-on, grassroots exhaustive effort. When it was done, the couple continued to work through the equally rigorous process of applying for listing on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Once designated, the structure was also recognized as California State Historical Landmark #860. Justifiably proud, the Redings wanted to celebrate. They had effectively proven that Capitola was the longest established resort on the Pacific Coast—that is, the oldest seaside settlement founded as a vacation destination that still existed as one.



Jim and Barbara Reding look over plans for the Hihn Superintendent's Office as the 1972 renovation gets underway

To commemorate this achievement, a Heritage Day Committee set up an observance featuring a talk by Senator Donald Gunsky and local dignitaries, with entertainment provided by the U.S. Army Band, the Fort Ord Honor Guard (dressed in Army uniforms of the 1870s), the Mid-County Seniors Band, the Capitola Elementary School Band, and bagpiper Jim McLaughlin.

It was a hometown affair. The only thing missing was the guarantee of a large audience to witness the occasion.

It was then that Jim Reding, a Campbell school teacher and Capitola resident, brainstormed an idea. He had just been a spectator at the Bay to Breakers in San Francisco, and on the way home, began thinking about a foot race along the coast from Santa Cruz to the Capitola.

He guessed the race might provide his heritage celebration with a big crowd, and he was right.

Cliff Avenue neighbor Wayne Fontes contacted Soquel High track coach Ken Thomas to join the committee. Ken Napier, a long distance runner from Los Gatos, and runner Pete Sorensen of San Francisco, provided technical advice. Heritage Day Committee leaders Doris Susanj and Fontes spoke before local governmental agencies and obtained what seemed impossible—a coordinated approval and permits to move ahead. The City of Capitola contributed funds to help finance costs.

When the inaugural race concluded, giving the Capitola Heritage Day a fine attendance, the contest was so welcome that supporters sought to repeat it. Tomas, Fontes, and Reding organized a second race, and from there the Wharf to Wharf became the tradition that we now enjoy.

Today, as the runners blast down Portola Drive toward the finish line, a handful of longtime Cliff Avenue neighbors—including the Redings, Wayne and Audrey Fontes, and Bruce and Dori Arthur—look down the hill and reflect on Hihn's Superintendent Office and the Heritage Day celebration of 1973. The memories are of a sweet triumph, but also days of long hours working to replace a mud sill foundation, upgrade the plumbing and electricity, and fix the roof, windows, attic, and stairs.

Instigation of a foot race and the accomplishment of historic preservation would seem strange bedfellows anywhere else, but in Capitola—and within the archives of the museum—they sit side-by-side.

Three Generations of Macdonalds Visit 1820 Wharf Road

By Niels Kisling

Brad Macdonald founded Shadowbrook Restaurant along with partner Ed Philippet. The restaurant opened in 1947 and enjoys world acclaim to this

day. The home that sits at what is now 1820 Wharf Road used to be situated near the parking lot above Shadowbrook at 122 Wharf Road next to the present-day menu board.

On July 14, 2009, David Macdonald and his family happened to walk by 1820 Wharf Road. David is the son of Brad and Bea Macdonald. He and his wife Jeanne were on vacation in Capitola with his son Damon, daughter-in-law Anne, and their four children. David and Jeanne live in Palm Desert, and Damon and his family live in Utah. David lived in our house as a child, both in front of Shadowbrook and where it sits today. He placed the date of the move at 1950 when he was six years old.

Brad Macdonald's wife Bea is still living in a care facility in Utah. Brad Macdonald passed away in 1999.



Macdonalds of three generations visit the old family home. Top Row: Jeanne, David and Damon; Middle Row: Rachel, Daniel, Emily and Anne; Bottom Left: Robert



Look for this historical plaque when walking along Wharf Road

Join Us on October 4th for an Afternoon of Food, Wine and Music at Our First Ever Fundraiser

The Capitola Historical Museum Board of Trustees is elated with the news that Vann Slatter of Hunter Hill Vineyard and Winery and Michael Clark of Michael's On Main have stepped forward as the first to organize a benefit for the Capitola Historical Museum.

When: Sunday, October 4th from 1–5pm

Where: Michael's on Main in Soquel

What to Expect: Delicious appetizers, local fine wine, music by Mike Hadley and the Groove, and a silent and live auction.

Help us preserve Capitola's history.

Tickets are \$25 per person, available at the museum or at the door. Please call Carolyn Swift at the museum, 464-0322, for additional information regarding the event or donations of auction items.

President's Corner

In seasons past, the Capitola Museum has seen number counts of a hundred or more visitors only on special days, such as an exhibit reception, or the Begonia Festival weekend. A new trend is starting, however, that we are pleased to announce. The hundred-person mark is being achieved on "just another Sunday" when nothing special is going on!

It may be the "stay-cation" economy, the variety of events during the city's 60th birthday year, or the attraction of the current show, "Just Beachy—Capitola in the 1950s." Whatever the reasons, the tireless dedication of museum volunteers is making it happen.

Those volunteers challenged with the task of welcoming sixty or more visitors in a two-hour shift often report that they love it, too. A sense of excitement is created with a crowded museum—conversational buzz of talking, the questions, the exclamations of those “looking backward” in time.

For three years now, the museum has been able to keep track of visitor statistics in a computerized program and graphically compare each season’s attendance. When the beach cottage was delivered out front in 2007, the counts began to pop. They increased even more with our colorful “Take a Peek” inviter. Additional hours on Wednesdays and the completion of the bathhouse jumped the numbers up from a total of 3,000 in 2006 to more than 5,500 in 2008.

In 2009, we are already over the 5,000 visitor mark for the year, it appears another new record is in the making. To all who continue signing up for shifts, opening the doors, and smiling to all our guests, thank you!

Acknowledgments

Funds received in response to our last newsletter will be used to restore historically significant artifacts in the Museum collection. Many thanks to the following generous people:

- Cheryl Barkey
- Ted Burke
- Nancy Campeau
- Mike Clark
- Emil Edgren
- Rick Feldner
- Ron and Diane Graves
- Marvin Jensen
- Robert and Elda McLean
- Paul Parsons
- Ettamae Shaffer

Location, Location, Vacation

Attributed to a number of sources over the years, the phrase “location, location, location” goes as far

back as 1926, when it first appeared in the Chicago Tribune.

When ideas for the next museum show were being considered, a variation on the slogan proved irresistible. Thanks to board member Niels Kisling, the title will be “Location, Location, *Vacation*—The Landmark History of Capitola.”

Capitola history illustrates how coastal, seashore living is indeed all about location. The resort was born, in fact, the moment inland valley dwellers found a route over the Santa Cruz Mountains and into Soquel. Ocean access and cooler temperatures, as everyone knows in the summertime, are Capitola’s best known features.

Landmarks also abound in and around Capitola Village, defining its boundaries, identity, and tourist appeal.

“Location, Location, Vacation—The Landmark History of Capitola,” is a theme flexible enough to allow illustration of the Victorian era of the 1890s and the speculative real estate era of the 1920s, as well as the Baby-Boom that reshaped Capitola neighborhoods after World War II. The current show, “Just Beachy—Capitola in the 1950s,” is due to close in late October, with the new exhibit opening scheduled just before the Christmas holiday.

Published by the Capitola Historical Museum
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Museum Hours: Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from 12 to 4 p.m.
Museum Director: Carolyn Swift
Board of Trustees: Linda Smith (President), Darcy Horton (Vice President), Tom McGranahan (Treasurer), Topsy Smalley (Secretary), Gordon van Zuiden, Bob Anderson, and Niels Kisling